

274 SIMILE ZOLA, NOVELIST AND REFORMER

The letter was dated September 18, 1888, on which very day the sessions of the Central Criminal Court began, but the Crown applied for a postponement of the trial, as Vizetelly's counsel, who had been instructed to oppose any postponement, failed to attend, and Vizetelly himself was refused admittance by an officious policeman, the case was at once put off until October. This was very prejudicial to Vizetelly's business, particularly as the attacks of certain prints did not cease. Looking back, it greatly astonishes the writer that no application was ever made to commit the publishers of several London and provincial newspapers for circulating comments on a case which was *sub judice*, comments well calculated to prevent the defendant from obtaining a fair trial. But that idea does not seem to have occurred either to Vizetelly or to anybody about him. He at first had felt fairly confident respecting the issue of the case, and, as an old journalist, had entertained nothing but contempt for the terriers of the profession who barked at his heels. But his confidence had been shaken by the intervention of the Government and was finally undermined by well-meaning friends who, owing to the postponement of the proceedings, had many an opportunity to tender counsel.

Their motives were most honourable and praiseworthy, no doubt. But the effects of their solicitude were disastrous.

"In the multitude of counsellors there is wisdom," it has been said, but in Vizetelly's case there came chaos. While

some urged him to fight, others begged that he would do no

such thing. There was an incessant *chassé-croisé* of advice ;

and Vizetelly, now resolving on one course, and now on

another, was at last at a loss what to do.

Had he been

a younger man the case would have been very different, for